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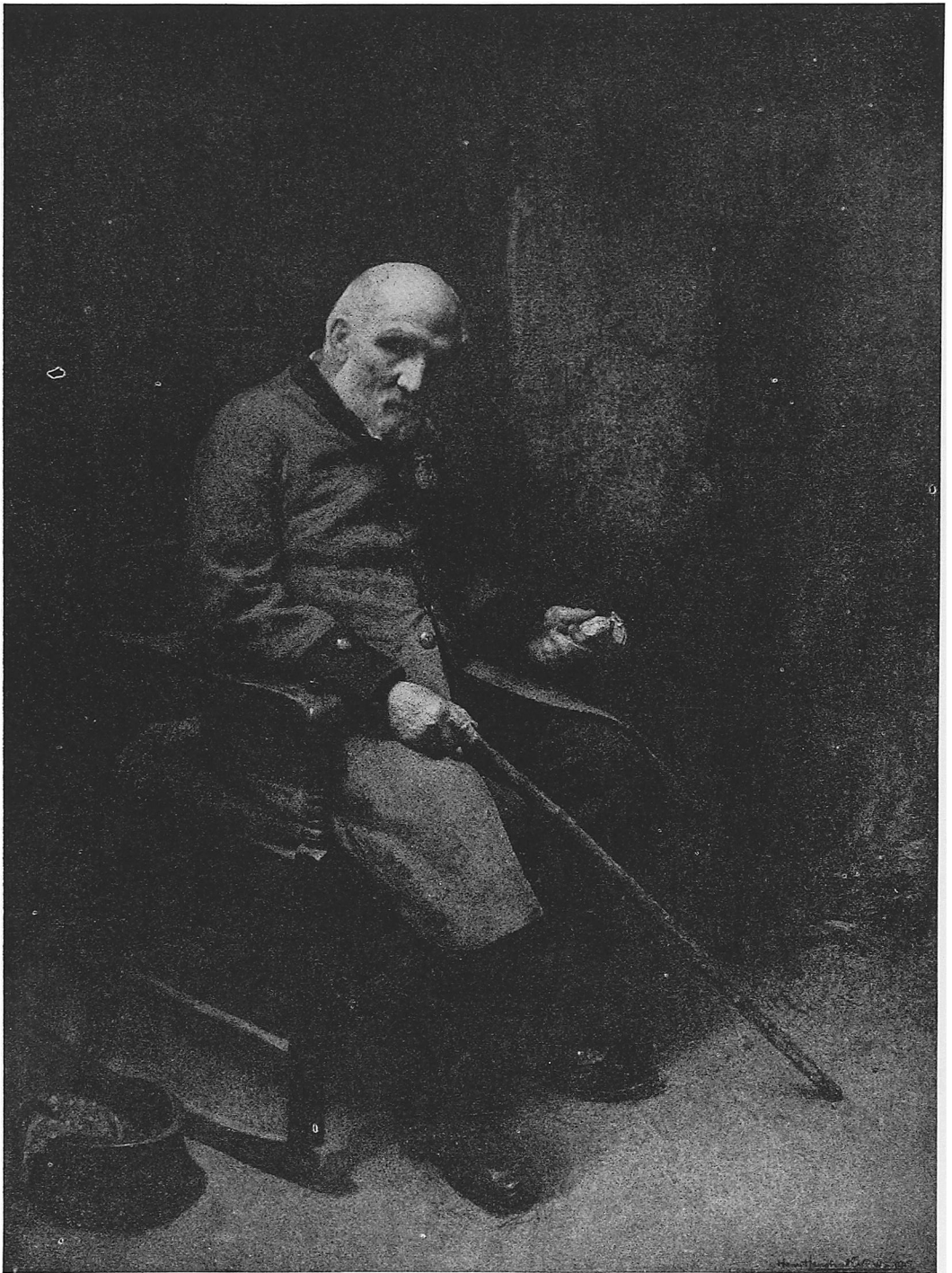
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THE OLD SOLDIER R. A.—15
By HORACE HENSHELL, R. W. S.

*"An Old Soldier who has seen more
than one stricken field, yet in the
evening of life has found peace."*



WORDS OF COMFORT R. A.—15
By HORACE HENSHALL, R. W. S.

Current Art Topics

By "MAHLSTICK," London Correspondent
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WITH the Paris Salon closed and the German Galleries in most cases transformed into hospitals, London can, without cavil, claim to be the remaining center of such artistic interests as have survived the clash of arms.

The Royal Academy opened its doors on the first Monday in May, inaugurating according to tradition, the London Season. The annual banquet, indeed, has this year not been held; it usually rivals in interest as a social function the Guildhall banquet, and frequently forms the occasion, when important events and purposes in Imperial

policy are notified to the Empire and to the world at large. But the evening reception in June by the President and Council is to take place as hitherto. Society goes to it, literally in its thousands; it is popularly known as the "Strawberry Crush,"—that succulent berry having formed the dominant item in the refreshment menu for generations, an amusing indication of the conservative instincts of the Britisher.

Following the lead given by the Academy, the other exhibitions, including the "Old Water Color," the "Royal Institute," "The International," the "British Artists,"

the "Painters Etchers," etc., are holding their usual shows. On its side the public have not been slow to respond in the same spirit, and the attendance and the sales have been, so far, but little below the average.

When we consider the nature of the struggle in which the English people are engaged, this diversion of interest from its life and death issue speaks volumes for their nerve, as well as for their confidence in their power and resource. Here and there, however, a warning dissentient voice may be heard, protesting against the insouciance, as based on ignorance of the might and determination of the enemy; but rightly or wrongly, the English refuse to be dismayed and the *mot d'ordre* continues to be "business as usual" sandwiched with no small measure of pleasure.

Last month I referred at some length to what has always been a day apart in the artistic year, viz., "Show Sunday." Since then another day of mark in the artistic circle has come and gone—"Varnishing Day." There are varnishing days various, as of course every picture exhibition has a sort of review day, for the contributors of the works displayed. But "Varnishing Day" is the one at the Royal Academy. It falls a week before the Academy opens its doors to the shilling multitude; the three days preceding are allotted—the Thursday to royalty, when crowned heads—more or less—walk through the picture-hung rooms—with the President and Council in nervous attendance; Friday the "Private View" day when the elite of society, literature, science, music and the drama throng the galleries. This "Private View" in the days of Ruskin and earlier, used to be a very busy one for the sales clerks, but of late it has become just a society parade, avoided by genuine lovers of pictures and by intending purchasers. The Saturday is devoted to the "Banquet." It is always attended by one or more members of the Royal family, by the chiefs of the Govern-

ment and the "Opposition," and as I have said, it is frequently the occasion for political pronouncements of Imperial importance.

But to return to "Varnishing Day." The name is a relic of the period when a coat of varnish was considered as necessary to the final completion and rounding off of a picture, as its frame; and I am strongly of opinion that the excellent preservation of most old pictures is owing to this practice—nowadays quite *demodé*. Well, on this day all those non-academic painters and sculptors fortunate enough to have had their works accepted, are invited to inspect them. What, however, it mostly amounts to, is that it still remains for the majority of artists, in spite of revolutionists and secessionists of every brand and grade, the great day of reunion for those who once fellow-students and chums, have inevitably drifted apart with the varying tides and winds of life's voyage.

From North, South, East and West they come to renew for one day at least, their ancient friendships, to discuss and criticize the changes and developments in their works, and take note perchance, if only mentally, of the changes time and fate have wrought in each other.

Suggestive, and even sad, occasionally are some of the contrasts in life's course indicated by these changes; the more apparent because hardly in any other profession do occasions occur, when those who have attained to the highest pinnacle of success, meet on the common ground of professional brotherhood, their comrades who have failed and fallen out in the race. Brown, who is housed palatially in Kensington or St. John's Wood, who entertains royalty and cabinet ministers—may, if he is the good fellow we take him to be—and he generally is—be seen chatting in friendly intimacy with his old time crony, Smith, who probably that morning had toasted or fried his own breakfast—a bloater or bit o' bacon—at the stove in his combined din-

ing, sleeping, living room and studio, situated somewhere in the backwoods of Camden Town or Bloomsbury. Again they are equals, the success of one, the failure of the other forgotten—they meet as man and man, friend and friend. I doubt if elsewhere in life this can occur so normally. In commerce, in the law, in literature, and even in the drama, the paths of the winners and the losers diverge too widely, ordinarily, to meet again; but it is not so in the camaraderie of the brush and the chisel. It is possible, too, that Brown knows in his heart that for all his palace in Mayfair he will not finally be reckoned as high in the great hierarchy of art, as Smith in his studio den amid the mean streets of Camden Town.

On this last Monday of April the habits of Piccadilly may, if observant, have noted the unusual number of men affecting "Norfolks" and knickerbockers of serviceable tweeds—sunburnt and weather-tanned—and mostly paint box in hand; these are the landscape and marine painters who, from the scenes of their labors, far from the murky skies and thronged streets of the metropolis have come up for what is to many their annual visit to London.

Inside the famous precincts of Burlington House, the galleries wear a very different aspect from that familiar to visitors to the exhibition. The polished parquetry of the floors is protected by thick felt; in each room tall trestle ladders stand about with workmen ready to place them as required by artists wishing to retouch pictures of very lofty dimensions or that are "skied." In the earlier part of the day, the artists more or less wander in procession round the rooms anxiously scanning the walls, each for his own work, no easy matter sometimes to discover, especially to the neophyte, who unaccustomed to the scale of things, looks for his chef d'oeuvre two feet square among the canvases six or eight feet square, and when finally perhaps some more experienced friend points it out to

him, at first refuses to believe that such a mere postage stamp is the work that filled his own studio with its imposing proportions—to some this experience is almost the shock of their lives. The way in which different temperaments are affected in the circumstances, can afford amusement to the observer. One artist may be seen surreptitiously working on his picture as if ashamed to own its authorship, whilst his neighbor with a palette representative of a color factory's output, continues through the day to skirmish around on his picture reckless of the strong possibility of spoiling it, so long as he is beholden of men. There is naturally much conviviality at these foregatherings, and frequent visits to neighboring hostelry, but the hours pass, another "Varnishing Day" has come and gone and with dusk the pictures are left to make their debut before the world, freighted with the ambitions and hopes of many an anxious heart and home. This year the exhibition shows, as was to be expected, evidence of the war, but yet it is by no means to be described as a "Khaki" exhibition. The war, mighty and moving drama that it is, has nevertheless given birth to very little pictorial inspiration of a high order. William Hatherell's "Mass in a Country House for Wounded Soldiers" is perhaps the most sincere in feeling, surpassing in that respect Lavery's more popular picture "Wounded; London Hospital." A white-haired priest—in reality a portrait of Bishop Brindle of Nottingham, who in the Egyptian campaign was frequently mentioned in despatches, is saying Mass in the spacious entrance hall of a country mansion. It is crowded, as is also the great staircase, flight above flight, with a promiscuous crowd of wounded soldiers, nurses, servants, and fashionably attired visitors—men, women and children, but motley as is the congregation and strange the setting for such a scene, yet in the attitudes and expressions of those present, from the invalids in khaki to the ladies in their latest

"creations" one feels the presence of the great war and its awful sacrifice. In Lavery's picture, this feeling of the tragedy of the war is lost, as in reality it must be, in the hustling routine of a great hospital working at high pressure. The other war pictures lack conviction and sincerity, they hardly pretend to draw their motifs or inspiration from actual contact with life in trench or field.

Among the landscapes there are none can compare for a vivid presentation of Nature with Arnesby Brown's brilliant and daring canvases, wherein he depicts the pictorial qualities and effects, which characterize the gloom and gleam of midsummer thunderstorms over the bright fresh foliage and verdure of an English June landscape. They are truly remarkable works. Detail is reduced to its lowest factor, and yet the pictures convey quite an extraordinary sense of fullness, the eye of the spectator in vain tries to plumb the vaporous purple glooms of the storm clouds against which this artist is so fond of throwing in startling relief the outstanding form, color and massive modeling of his cattle. This fine artist has this year been elected—as I stated in a recent letter—to full Academic honors, after an unusually brief probation as an Associate. I understand that the American art public is likely to become more familiar with his work

through the discerning enterprise of Mr. Luscombe Carroll of the Carroll Gallery.

Another animal painter—N. H. J. Baird, R. O. I.—whose work is well known to many of my readers, is represented by a very charming, if somewhat slight genre picture entitled "A Bit o' Cheer," perfect in tone and color, and simply natural in incident. This picture, which has the honor of being hung on the line, is reproduced herein. Robert Meyerheim, R. I., owing to his very serious illness, is not exhibiting any of his exquisite idylls of the "English Countryside." I am glad to say, however, that he is now making a recovery such as none of his friends dared to hope for.

Henry Henshall, R. W. S., whose work is also becoming well known in America, is represented by three important works, an unusual number for an outside artist. Two of the pictures are reproduced herein, "The Old Soldier" and "Words of Comfort," the latter a typical picture of the artist's art.

Of the two painters recently elected to the Academy, Mr. Glyn Philpotts is peculiar in that he has rarely shown any work at Burlington House, certainly not for nearly a decade. What is undoubtedly one of his finest works—"The Marble Cutter"—was acquired from the St. Louis Exhibition for the Hackley Gallery of Muskegon, through the far-sightedness of Mr. Raymond Wyer, its highly capable director.